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CHRISTIANITY

A SYSTEM OF

PEACE.

IN TWO LETTERS.

BY THOMAS PARSONS,

A MINISTER OF THE BAPTIST SOCIETY, IN ENGLAND.

BURLINGTON, N. J.

PUBLISHED BY DAVID ALLINSON.

1813.

DAVID ALLINSON

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BY THOMAS PARSONS,

A MINISTER OF THE BAPTIST SOCIETY, IN ENGLAND.

"No two things can be more different, than the *Heroick* and the *Christian* characters." *Paley's Evidences of Christianity,* vol. 2. p. 32.

"And he shall judge among the nations; and shall *work conviction* in many peoples: and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Lowth's Translation of Isaiah, ch. 2. ver. 4.

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PREFACE.

WHILE thousands and tens of thousands are endeavouring to form an estimate of the national and individual advantages and disadvantages, which they apprehend war and peace respectively produce, and are exerting their influence accordingly in promoting the continuance of the one, or the return of the other; it is presumed there are some, and probably not a very small number who, after repeated serious perusals of the doctrines and precepts of Christ and his apostles, apprehend that the prosecution of war in any shape, or upon any ground, can scarcely be reconciled to those injunctions, and that it is therefore unlawful for Christians. To such as these, the subjoined Letters are offered, with a humble hope that the arguments they contain will enable them to judge of the rectitude of those apprehensions. There may also be other readers not quite so conversant with the New Testament, who, from the hints and illustrations in the following little work, may be induced to act like the Bereans, and see for themselves, whether the whole tenour of the Gospel is not repugnant to war. These, as well as the former class, if sincerely desirous of knowing the truth, will surely not seek in vain.

It is hoped that the following extract from a Fast Sermon, preached about four years ago by a pious clergyman, and printed, but not published, may without impropriety be introduced here.—The repeated perusal of it has, in some degree, tended to encourage the present measure.

"The universal propagation of the Gospel is indeed an event which, above every other, must excite the prayers and engage the attention of the real Christian. The powers of darkness seem about to be shaken. To the dissemination of the pure and undefiled religion of a crucified Redeemer, their utmost rage and malice will be opposed: and we have Scriptural grounds for apprehending that its progress will be made through scenes of anarchy and blood. Wars will not yet cease to make havock on the earth. More widows and orphans are doomed to make lamentation; the effusion of human blood will continue to be great; and cities and kingdoms will yet be devoted to devastation and ruin. But these awful commotions will ultimately subside into universal peace; they will be preparatory to the complete establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom; when all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him. Psalm lxxii. 11.

*"If then we desire to promote genuine religion in a world that lieth in wickedness; if we would avert the destruction of our favoured country, and save our souls from the inconceivably more dreadful punishment, which is treasured up for the impenitent sinner against the day of wrath; let us live as becometh the Gospel of Christ. It is the prevalence of His grace in the heart and affections, which can alone bring peace on earth; and which will enable us to obey that new commandment of our Divine Master, which he has so affectingly exemplified, to love one another. To our unremitting endeavours for the accomplishment of an object, which transcends every other in magnitude and utility—an object which, while it promotes our Redeemer's glory, ensures the present peace and future happiness of mankind—let us add our fervent prayers, that God will hasten the time, when all nations shall believe in, and obey, the Gospel. Then may we anticipate, with devout rapture, that blissful consummation; when 'the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; when they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and learn war no more; and when all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.'—*Is. xi. 6. ii. 4. Rev. xi. 15."

LETTER I.

REVERENDSIR,

I PRESUME to commence this Address with a profession of great respect for your talents, character, and amiable manners, as sincere as, in my opinion, it is merited: nothing therefore in the subsequent pages, will, I hope, be distorted to insinuate any personal sentiment, incompatible with this profession.

Having for a series of years entertained the idea, that Christianity tends to eradicate every principle in the human heart that is promotive of hostility amongst mankind, I felt peculiar pleasure in reading Mr. Warner's Sermon on that subject; and admired the fortitude and integrity of the preacher, who dared to avow a doctrine so little accommodated to the prevalent opinion of the age, as the one that his discourse attempted to establish, that "*War is inconsistent with Christianity.*"

Your letter to Mr. Warner, on the publication of that sermon, does honour to your abilities as a writer, and to your urbanity as an opponent. I cannot however, admit, that in support of war of any description, it has effected the least change in my mind: the question I consider as standing exactly in the same position, as before the subject was agitated. War is a state of violence, a sanguinary conflict between two or more nations, in the issue of which, the interest and happiness of the people composing those nations, are partially or wholly involved. Does Christianity encourage, or prohibit such vindictive appeals to arms? This is the inquiry, divested of all adventitious circumstances. I do firmly believe, that the New Testament, which is the Christian's supreme and sufficient directory in all articles of faith and practice, opposes and discountenances war; and that it admits of no principle, and authorizes no motive, in which war can originate, or by which it may be perpetuated.

The distinction made between offensive* and defensive

* It is the general practice of the European courts to publish manifestos, to vindicate their own conduct in commencing hostilities, and to charge the resisting nation with all the aggression which has provoked resentment, and justified retaliation. Hence the mass of the people, in every state are led to believe, and they really do believe, that the cause of their country is indisputably just: and pious people in the different states, when at war, are devoutly praying against each other. But the distinction between offensive and defensive war is less solid than verbal: the original ground of complaint

war, is not admitted into the Gospel of Christ, which gives no indulgence to the irascible or revengeful passions, by authorizing violence towards a fellow-creature on any occasion.

You will perceive, Sir, that whatever you may think of my prudence, I mean to take up the subject fairly, and free from all equivocation or subterfuge.

The proposition which Mr. Warner has adopted, I avow in its full extent; and shall attempt to prove, that by the genuine *spirit of the New Testament*, the *precepts it inculcates*, and the *examples it exhibits*, "War is inconsistent with Christianity."

That in the compass of a short sermon, the evidence in support of Mr. Warner's thesis is not so diffusive as the authority to which he appeals would have supplied, is less a subject of surprise than regret. But whatever be his intentions as to a continuance of the discussion, the doctrine is sufficiently important to demand serious investigation; and if my humble effort be the means of exciting the attention of superiour advocates in the cause I wish to establish, I shall be highly gratified.

War is opposed to the *genius and spirit of Christianity*. This is deducible from the prophecies of the Messiah's advent, and the blessings which were to flow from thence. In the language of inspiration, one of his emphatical titles is, the "Prince of Peace;" the heralds of salvation are the "publishers of peace;" in the figurative style of prediction, the ferocious passions were to be extirpated: "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." In the Redeemer's reign, "judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field; and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Such intimations of the nature and tendency of the Gospel might, as you know, be swelled to a large extent; but these quotations may be sufficient to authorize me in asserting, that the kingdom of the Redeemer was, by

is soon lost sight of; the aggressor is often brought to act on the defensive; and it is not uncommon for both parties to preface a rupture by so many reciprocal affronts, as to render it impracticable to decide, which of them constituted the original aggression. "Every just war," says the admirable Paley, "is a *defensive* war, inasmuch as every just war supposes an injury perpetrated, attempted, or feared." A government, in any state, may with the greatest facility maintain that some injury is *perpetrated, attempted*, or *feared*, and thus justify hostilities whenever it thinks proper to commence them.—See page 23 of Let. 2.

the spirit of prophecy, described as peaceable and happy, free from all discordant principles, and exempt from hostility. The same idea is confirmed by the current of history in the New Testament. The angel who appeared to the shepherds, having announced the birth of the Saviour, was joined by a multitude of the heavenly host in praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." The tranquillity which is said to have spread over the whole world at this auspicious period, is finely indicative of His character, and the genius of His government, who thus came into the world to effect reconciliation and peace between God and men, and by inevitable consequence to establish reciprocal benevolence and peace upon earth. Who can think of war and all its train of horrours as compatible with Christianity, when he views the lowly Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, and hears him recite that prophecy—"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bound?" Who can imagine sanguinary conflicts between the progeny of God to be sanctioned by the blessed Jesus, when he hears the gracious invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart?" But to avoid prolixity, where evidence is so various and so copious, I shall only state that the Most High is styled the God of Peace, that Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, that his Gospel is the Gospel of Peace, that his Apostles were the Ambassadours of Peace, and that the fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law." Characters distinguished by such dispositions can never be the slaves of diabolical passions; can never imbrue their hands in human blood. And the uniform tendency of Christ's doctrine and injunctions, as well as of all divine influence, is to form man after this heavenly model.

The *precepts of the Gospel*, which apply to this subject, are some of them direct, and some prohibitory: some enjoin the cultivation of benevolent principles, and amiable tempers; and others restrain and forbid anger, wrath, revenge, and every hostile passion.

Truth and virtue appeared all perfect and lovely in the person of Jesus Christ; yet, "he came unto his own, and his own received him not." The world hated him, "because he testified of it, that the works thereof are evil." The object of his entrance into our world, was to destroy the works

of the devil, to save mankind from sin, and to make sinners holy and happy. His instructions and commands uniformly tend to the extinction of every immoral propensity, and the promotion of every virtuous principle. His precepts are designed to counteract and expel the evils of our nature, and to form the heart for universal goodness.

Ambition, selfishness, and revenge, are the causes of war; but the Christian must be clothed with humility, must love his neighbour as himself, and patiently submit to injurious treatment. The love of the world must be eradicated from his bosom, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind: let each esteem other better than htmself." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you." Christians are forbidden to assume authority over one another. "Whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The duty of forgiveness is enforced upon them with the most awful sanction; "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

The disciples of CHRIST were taught to expect reproach and persecution; but they were instructed to bear the hatred of the world with patience. They are not to repel injuries by force; they are not to indulge resentment; but are directed to love their enemies, to bless them that curse them, to pray for them that despitefully use them, and to return good for evil. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Instead of entering into contention and strife, they are to "have peace one with another," "to follow peace with all men;" and "if it be possible, to live peaceably with all men." Love is the grand principle of the religion of Christ; from whence piety towards GOD, and active, unwearied, and universal benevolence towards men, must proceed. "Love is of GOD, and he that loveth not, knoweth not GOD, for GOD is love. "Finally, brethren, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the GOD of love and peace shall be with you."

The *examples* of CHRIST, and the first converts to Christianity, are in perfect consistency with this limited view of the genius and the precepts of the Gospel. When the

apostles, after having been imprisoned and beaten, departed from the Jewish council; they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of JESUS CHRIST. St. Stephen, in imitation of his Divine Master, fell victim to the rage of his persecutors, and offered up his last breath in praying for them. After Saul had been converted, and became a zealous promoter of the Christian cause, a number of his implacable enemies confederated together to destroy him; this was in the true spirit of the world: and had the disciples who were persecuted by him with such inveterate malignity before his conversion, associated together for the purpose of ridding themselves and the world of such a ferocious zealot, they might, on the generally-admitted principles of mankind, have been vindicated. But religion taught them a milder lesson, and they never fled from their enemies, or submitted to their fate without resistance or murmuring. They availed themselves of the security afforded them by the laws of the state, but when these were violated to oppress them, or perverted to effect their destruction, they fled from one city to another, but never offered violence to their assailants, nor attempted to ensure their safety by injuring, much less by killing their enemies. They persisted with unshaken fortitude in the path of duty, and left their comforts and their lives to the disposal of Him, to whose service alone they were devoted. Our Lord had directed his disciples, when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, to seek a place of safety, and leave the unhappy city to its dreadful doom: this, history informs us they did; and from thence we may infer they took no part in the defence of their country.

When we reflect on the impression made upon the minds of the populace, by the doctrine preached and miracles performed by the apostles, and that neither their influence with the multitude, nor their supernatural powers, were ever employed to protect themselves from those who thirsted for their blood; we have the clearest proof that they did not war after the flesh, and that they considered the weapons of their warfare to be not carnal, but spiritual.

It is, however, in the life and actions of the Saviour of mankind, that we contemplate the most perfect illustration of those principles, and that conduct which he recommends and enjoins upon all that become his disciples. In Him we behold the uniform operation of that forbearing, unresisting, peaceful spirit which he inculcates upon his followers. He had all power in heaven and earth committed unto him; yet he submitted to reproach, to indignity, to violence, and to death, without ever working a miracle to repress his enemies, or screen himself from their rage. "He was led as

a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." "He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them who plucked off the hair." "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously." Prince of Peace! When shall the mild and benignant system, which thy life and doctrine illustrate, be diffused throughout the world? When shall holy love be the universal principle that shall glow in every bosom, stimulate every action, and unite thy rational creatures in one permanent connexion of purity and peace?

Thus, reverend Sir, I submit to your notice a specimen of the kind of evidence on which the validity of Mr. Warner's proposition rests. It might easily have been extended by a more particular citation of authorities and examples; but I content myself with stating what appears to me sufficient proof of the fact, that "*War is inconsistent with Christianity.*" I have limited myself to the New Testament,* and the prophecies which relate to the period of which it gives us the history; because I do not think myself justified in blending either Judaism or Gentilism with Christianity: an extension of the field of controversy weakens the force on each side, protracts the contest, and eludes decision; or, in a figure better suited to my theme, a Christian warriour requires the aid of no weapons, but those with which he is supplied by the Captain of his Salvation.

Many years are passed away, since I read Mr. Soame Jenyns on the Internal Evidence of Christianity; and however incompatible with national partiality, and the general system of politicks, I profess a firm belief in the doctrine he has with great elegance advanced, namely, that patriotism, (in the generally-admitted acceptation of the term,) and active courage are not included in the class of Christian virtues, as those virtues are detailed in the New Testament. "The

* Were it my misfortune to coincide in opinion with a Rev. Gentleman, when he says, "It is not to be supposed, that in the short history given by the apostles, one thousandth part of the doctrine or instruction delivered by our Saviour to his disciples could be recorded," I certainly should not have resorted to the New Testament as the supreme arbitrator in any question which affects Christianity, but should have appealed at once to that "other light" of which the author speaks, and have taken refuge in the bosom of infallibility. To the Roman Church, every man who holds such an opinion ought, in my humble judgment, to conform, if he wish to secure a consistency of character. See *Guide to the Church*, by the Rev. C. Daubeny, page 23. The proper basis on which Protestantism is supported, will be found in the *sufficiency* of the holy Scriptures for salvation, as asserted in the Sixth Article of the established religion in this kingdom.

truth is," (says archdeacon Paley,)* "there are two opposite descriptions of character under which mankind may generally be classed. The one possesses vigour, firmness, resolution; is daring and active, quick in its sensibilities, jealous of its fame, eager in its attachments, inflexible in its purpose, violent in its resentments: the other, meek, yielding, complying, forgiving; not prompt to act, but willing to suffer; silent and gentle under rudeness and insult; suing for reconciliation where others would demand satisfaction; giving way to the pushes of impudence; conceding and indulgent to the prejudices, the wrong-headedness, the intractability of those with whom it has to deal."

"The former of these characters is, and ever has been, the favourite of the world. It is the character of great men. There is a dignity in it which universally commands respect. The latter is poor-spirited, tame, and abject. Yet so it hath happened, that with the Founder of Christianity, this latter is the subject of his commendation, his precepts, his example; and that the former is so in no part of its composition."

If then it be the duty of a Christian minister, to endeavour to impress upon his audience the difference between a man of the world, and a disciple of Christ; if it be obligatory upon him, to expose the mistakes and rectify the errours generally prevalent, and to exhibit a fair and unequivocal statement of the gospel, in its genuine spirit and practical requisitions, Mr. Warner's conduct can stand in need of neither apology nor vindication. Some doubt has indeed been suggested, as to the propriety of engaging the publick attention to such a subject, at a period when, it is asserted, all the vigour and spirit of the nation should, instead of being depressed, be excited and brought into action. But the wise Physician, who sees around him the wide-spreading infection, will direct his immediate efforts to check its progress, and not suffer his patients to linger in protracted disease, until the most skilful applications become unavailable. The man of God, anxious, not merely to discharge his official duties, but also to extend and disseminate the pure principles of our holy religion, will combine discretion with zeal, and seize those opportunities for reproof, admonition and instruction, which existing circumstances point out as peculiarly proper. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Several modern versions,† now before me, establish the accuracy of your criticism on Matt. xxvi. 52, in reading *by* instead of *with* the sword: yet, with deference to superiour

* View of the Evidences of Christianity, by Archdeacon Paley vol. ii. p. 30, 31.

† Campbell, Wakefield, Newcome.

penetration, I do not perceive the least danger of misapprehension, as that verse stands in the common translation. If a person be said to be killed *with* a sword or *by* a sword, the hearer will, in either form, have precisely the same idea of the fact. It is of more importance to obtain the genuine meaning of the passage; and in my judgment, it includes a reprehension of the violence which Peter's zeal had prompted him to—"Put up thy sword again into *his* place:" and an intimation that Peter should lose his own life by violence, "for all they that take the sword, shall perish by the sword." That Peter continued to wear a sword after this rebuke, is highly improbable; the following part of our Lord's discourse on the occasion, certainly implies that such weapons were superfluous in his cause. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Nor do we find Peter, in any part of his subsequent history, in a situation or disposition to require or use a sword. I can perceive no shadow of argument in support of even defensive war, derivable from this passage. The blessed Saviour rebukes the impetuous ardour of Peter, though proving the strength of his attachment to his Lord, as tending to the subversion of Scriptural prediction, and as totally unnecessary, because did his situation require aid, heaven would pour forth its legions to rescue him from his foes. The reasoning, if any can be deduced from this part of sacred history applicable to the subject of war, is all on the negative side; and we are taught by it, that intemperate zeal is not only useless, but may be indicative of imminent danger; and, from the striking example of the meek and lowly Jesus, that submission to the Divine will, even in the most calamitous circumstances, is a Christian's duty.

The passage you refer to, viz. Luke xxii. 36, has considerable difficulty; but as no expositor I have met with supposes the prophecy, permission, or direction, to be intended literally, the application of it to the subject of war is not strictly proper. And perhaps the advocates of war, of any description, would act more consistently, if, by wholly laying aside the New Testament, together with every attempt to bend it to their purpose, they took some other ground more analogous to the vindictive tempers in which war originates, and by which it is perpetuated. The law of nature, and the custom of nations, from the remotest antiquity down to the present day, would supply them with ample materials, and examples innumerable. But let them not misapply their talents in attempting to extract from the Gospel of Peace, originating with the God of Peace, and designed to diffuse

and multiply peace as long as the moon endureth, any sanction for war; a cruel system, which every particle of Christianity tends to exterminate for ever.

Every individual moves in a sphere more or less extended, in which his principles may operate usefully to himself and to others. The life of a Christian should be an exemplification of his principles; and these, to constitute the character, should be derived from the records of that worthy name by which he is called. Whatever statesmen and heroes make the rule of their conduct, and the objects of their pursuit, the Heir of Heaven, though possessing no qualifications for temporal distinction, will peaceably advance, marking his steps with benevolence, his heart open to the claims of human wretchedness, and often sighing over the miseries which ambition inflicts upon man; but his witness is in heaven, his treasure is there, and there are his affections. He is a good citizen, a quiet and submissive subject, and discharges the offices of his station with integrity He is content in humility, patient in sufferings, faithful in his immediate attachments; but were his powers equal to his wishes, his kindness would embrace the universe. He injures none, but is ready to every good word and work; and by patient continuance in well-doing, is seeking for glory, honour, and immortality. Multiply such characters until nations are composed of them, then shall "mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other;" "then shall every man sit under his vine and his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid."

Allow me, reverend Sir, to conclude this Address, by soliciting your candour, and by assuring you that I am,

With sincere respect,

Your obedient servant,

June 24, 1804. T. P.

LETTER II.

REVEREND SIR,

MAY I hope for your indulgence, when soliciting your attention to a second Address, on the subject of War, as being adverse to Christianity? In my first letter, a concise but comprehensive view of the religion of Christ, as opposed to national hostility, was attempted to be given: its obvious spirit and general complexion, the precepts it inculcates, and the exemplary illustrations it affords, were briefly

stated; and were intended to converge, in one luminous proposition, "Christianity is a System of Peace." This being the writer's immediate object, many of the lesser branches of the argument were not specifically noticed; from an apprehension, that if the general principle were established, its application to particular cases would require no qualifications but those of seriousness and consistency.

In the postscript of your letter to Mr. Warner, you appear to require a precept, precise and express, prohibiting defensive war. "Thou shalt do no injury in aggression, and thou shalt do no injury in self-defence, are commands so distinct in their essence, that from the possibility of hourly mistakes, the Gospel not only would, but ought to have contained the latter in the most direct language"* And in the letter with which I am honoured, you say, "Those who are required to obey, are to consider the words of the law, and not its spirit, and much less the intention of the law-giver." This I did not expect; and cannot avoid suspecting, that you have, in this instance, in some degree deviated from your habitual correctness of judgment and style. Have you not, Sir, often deduced from an author a prevailing opinion, which he no where in direct terms avows? You have, I presume, read Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: the last chapters of the first volume were generally understood to indicate that the author was verging towards infidelity. He is so guarded in his phraseology, that I believe he no where declares himself hostile to Christianity; yet no one doubted the fact. You have often noticed our statesmen referring to the spirit of the constitution, when no publick document supplied the opinion advanced in definitive terms. You must also have frequently observed pleaders introducing the occasion which rendered necessary a particular statute, the design of the legislature in passing it, the preamble, and the enacting clauses; and from these particulars deducing, by inference growing out of the whole, the spirit of the Act, and of consequence the applicable or inapplicable nature of the compulsory part to the case in hand. Indeed legal statutes are usually so general in their enactions, that subsequent decisions upon litigated cases are usually referred to, as more specifick and defined than the statutes themselves. If we apply the same kind of investigation to the New Testament, it will, I believe be clearly seen, that its mild benignant spirit is all peace; and that its precepts, though expressed in general terms, are sufficiently comprehensive to include and apply to all cases that can arise.†

* Letter to Mr. Warner, postscript, p. 28.

† If the words of the law, without any respect to its spirit and intention,

But you say, "I conclude, from the silence of Scripture respecting self-defence, and its declarations respecting aggression, that one is a sin, and the other is not." Permit me to ask, Sir, where are those specifick declarations respecting aggression? In consistency with the rule which you have prescribed in the case of defensive war, the *direct words* without any reference to the spirit of the law, much less to the intention of the law-giver, are required. I am really apprehensive that you have restricted the limits of the argument so much, as scarcely to allow yourself sufficient scope. I do not recollect any direct command in the New Testament against fighting or war, considered as applicable to nations; no, nor any specifick prohibitions of sanguinary strife between individuals. I am aware that every reader will at once advert to the sixth commandment, "thou shalt do no murder;" or "thou shalt not kill." And this most certainly is as obligatory upon Christians as upon the Israelites; yet, if ye may judge from the annals of both, neither of them ever understood this command to be a prohibition of war. The land of Israel once enjoyed rest for the space of eighty years; but I have no recollection of any Christian nation having abstained from war for so long a period. The result is, as I conceive, that if you are determined upon criminating even a war of offence, you must have recourse to the spirit and tendency of the Gospel, the general and comprehensive precepts it supplies, and the examples it exhibits.

But I presume to inquire, are not the moral directions given us in the New Testament, which are so comprehensive, and of such extended application, as to include the very thoughts and affections of the human heart, and embrace every individual, perfectly satisfactory and conclusive? Am I exonerated from guilt, merely because the statute does not in direct words describe circumstantially my offence? It is sufficient for the purpose, if the general terms employed comprehend the offence, without any perversion or force. And this, I conceive, is the fact respecting the moral obligations upon Christians, both on your side of the question and my own. Human laws are often defective in their construction, and in their application liable to be evaded; but "the law of the Lord is perfect."

The terms *defensive war* and *self-defence* are often employed indiscriminately by Grotius and others, when vindicating the propriety of the former. This does not seem to be accurate: the usage of language, and the common sense of mankind, distinguish them. Self-preservation against the unprovoked and unjust attack of an individual, in violation

are required to sanction Christian institutions, how will the observance of the Sabbath, and the baptism of infants, be maintained?

of those laws to which each owes obedience, and in defiance of their penal sanctions, is surely very different from the contentions between hostile nations, who admit no paramount tribunal to which they are amenable: who raise and pay armies to decide the dispute; and when exhausted of men and money, consent to a temporary truce, which they honour with the name of peace. If my life be threatened by an unprincipled ruffian, it implies no previous altercation; my assailant is armed, which I am not; he demands my money, which if I surrender, he (perhaps) politely takes his leave; and he by the robbery subjects himself, if taken, to the punishment which the law denounces. But what is there in all this that bears any analogy to war between independent states? The infringement of treaties, the disputes which are generated by commerce, extension of territory, the balance of power, a punctilio of honour, and a variety of other causes, produce jealousies or complaints; these, altercations; these, reciprocal provocations; and these, an appeal to arms. I do not perceive any parallelism between the two cases, and therefore doubt the propriety of confounding them.

Between duelling and national war, there is indeed a striking resemblance; but as duelling is a crime against all law, human and divine, I cannot suppose that you, Sir, meant to include it in your vindication of self-defence; and therefore dismiss it, with a warm wish, that every Christian state were exempt from a practice so diametrically opposite to every principle of morality.

I return to *self-defence;* and beg leave to observe, that the term simply means protection from an injury unprovoked, unexpected. and alarming. In such a situation the person assaulted is generally too much agitated, and the affair is conducted with too much celerity to admit of a recurrence to principle; or a dispassionate discussion of the conduct proper to be adopted: and the party acts generally as his constitutional impulse at the moment impels. Defence means, to resist the meditated stroke by a violent effort, whereby the blow is turned aside, and perhaps the assailant disabled from attempting to repeat it; should he fall in the struggle, I will not condemn the defender; but I cannot admit the action becomes a test of moral rectitude. If we are limited to the strict letter of the Divine command, "thou shalt not kill," that command is violated; and though the action be, by the circumstances of the case, palliated and deemed pardonable, it does not follow necessarily that it is perfectly justifiable. What would be the reflections of a good mind, in a serious moment, upon such an event? "If I had given the unhappy wretch what he demanded, without resistance, I should have been personally safe, and he might

have lived to repent of his crimes; but I suspect some rashness, when I sent the guilty creature with all his transgressions upon his head, into a dreadful eternity. Were a few guineas to be valued higher than a human life? Besides, my hope of future felicity was firm, and I trust well-founded: death does not overwhelm me with terrour. Had Providence permitted the intended stroke to terminate my frail existence, I feel a confidence within, that I should have been admitted to the felicity of heaven: but the miserable man whom I destroyed, ah! where is he?" I solemnly believe that such reflections would occur to a pious mind, at particular seasons, even to the closing period of life; and if this be admitted as reasonable and probable, whatever extenuation may be pleaded, the action would not appear to the person himself, completely just and satisfactory. It is one of those actions which leave some doubt, some uncertainty, and some dissatisfaction upon the mind.

Fear, however, is a more generally prevailing passion than revenge, and at least equally natural. The most usual method of evading danger, is by flight; or such a precipitant motion as disappoints the intended stroke. But whether such extraordinary occasions, or a moment of tremour, a paroxysm of fear or revenge, are judiciously selected as affording a criterion of the propriety of moral conduct, I submit to your deliberation. The calm and sober season of reflection will surely admit of examining and ascertaining the principles that should determine our conduct and our characters, with a prospect of success infinitely superiour to the period of agitation, terrour, or vengeance, when the passions are inflamed, and the proper exercise of reason is suspended.

To fly from impending danger, or to prevent an assailant from perpetrating his cruel design, is unquestionably right. But is it *equally* right to kill him, as to prevent his killing me? Is it perfectly just in me to divest him of life, when it is the excess of injustice in him to attempt to destroy mine? The fondest brothers may have their harmony interrupted by contention, which may rise to temporary hatred, and vindictive resentment; one of them, swelling with ungovernable rage, may insist upon an immediate decision of their dispute by the pistol or the sword; the other endeavours to mollify and subdue his anger by submissions, by entreaties, and by every expression of tender attachment. All is unavailable, he opens his bosom, and exclaims, "if you will not be appeased, take my life; your unhappy passion would give me the advantage, but I cannot kill my brother!" Does no such instance of refined morality grace the annals of mankind? And when I see a human being, may he not say,

with Wedgwood's negro, "Am I not a man, and a brother?" "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." said the benevolent Legislator of the Christian dispensation; and thus enjoins a system of moral excellence, exquisitely delicate, and yet exemplified in himself, when he gave his back to the smiters, and, expiring in torture, breathed out his soul in the tenderest prayer—"Father, forgive them." When I am forbidden to take vengeance, to retaliate, or to return evil for evil, the precept is as definite as can be necessary, applicable to any and every case that can occur; and whatever be the dictate of nature upon particular emergencies, the Christian religion prohibits my appeal to vindictive measures, and directs me to commit myself to him who judgeth righteously.

The laws of our country only permit the party assailed to injure or kill the aggressor, when no legal methods can be adopted; and strict morality requires the calling for assistance, flight, disarming the ruffian, or submitting to his requisition, though unjust, before the last dreadful expedient be resorted to. Religion, in my opinion, forbids the last; but whether I judge right, or otherwise, the instances of such extreme urgency are so rare, and when they occur, are so little susceptible of the intervention of principle, and so much determined by passions, at the time perhaps ungovernable, that they cannot, nor ought to be considered as forming a basis capable of supporting the right of defensive war.

But is the New Testament absolutely silent* respecting self-defence? Do not the commands of our Saviour suppose aggression, and prescribe the conduct to be observed when it occurs? Do they not necessarily imply some insult, some injury, yea, personal violence? When he says, "Resist not evil," does not the prohibition rest upon the actual sufferance of evil? When he adds, "Whoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also"† does he not forbid, in the clearest terms, retaliation? And in the suc-

* Postscript, p. 28.

† Grotius, eminent as he was, appears sometimes to trifle. In answering the objection arising from these words of our Lord, which enjoin us not to return injuries, he says, "But what injuries were these? Such as might easily be borne; not that patience was not commendable even in the greatest, but that he was content with somewhat a more limited patience; and therefore he instanceth only in a box on the ear, which neither endangers life nor limb, but implies only a slighting or contemning of us, which does not at all damnify us. This (precept) of *non-resistance* seems to be both explained and restrained by the subsequent instance of a box on the ear." What would a high-spirited man of honour say to this restriction? Would he consider a box on the ear an offence so very trivial, as to offer the other for a similar insult? Is it possible that great man, (Grotius,) could really believe the non-resistance of offence enjoined by our Lord, was limited precisely to the specifick instance mentioned? But a determined advocate will sometimes condescend to a quibble.

ceeding directions does he not enjoin us, as St. Paul expresses it, "not to avenge ourselves, but rather to "give place unto wrath;" and by particular instances, show us that we are "not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good?" Here we have suits at law, forcibly taking away a garment, compulsion, smiting, hatred, reproach, curses, despiteful treatment, and persecution; and instead of resistance and retaliation, we are commanded to acquiesce in, and even exceed the unjust demand; to love, to bless, and to pray for our injurious enemies. From hence it seems inevitably to follow, that resistance on the part of Christians is absolutely forbidden; and that self-defence, as consisting in injuring the aggressor, is prohibited.

Peter, who was present during this discourse, understood his Master in the sense here stated; he, under the influence of the same spirit, exhorts the Christians to whom he addressed his epistles, "to be pitiful and courteous; not rendering evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing,"* assuring them, it was better to suffer, (if the will of God be so,) for well-doing, than for evil-doing.† Their participation in the sufferings of Christ was to be to them a ground of rejoicing. Many of the first converts were servants, (or slaves,) and he directs them never by their misconduct to merit punishment, "but if when ye do well, and suffer, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God."‡

St. Paul gives similar directions in his epistle to the Romans,§ and when writing to the Corinthians exemplifies the practice, by reciting the conduct of himself and his brethren,‖ "being reviled we bless, being persecuted we suffer it, being defamed we entreat." The believing Hebrews "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods;"** and St. James states the yielding temper of those who were exposed to greater violence, "ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you."†† He exhorts them to exercise patience, and pronounces blessings on those who bore with meekness temptations and trials, and counted happy those who endured.

From the general tenour of the Gospel, and from particular and appropriate passages, it seems to be clearly deducible, that Christians are prohibited from all violence, even in self-defence.

I proceed to notice some other parts of the subject, not particularly replied to in my former letter. If Abraham's military excursion be cited in justification of war, may not persons of different opinions quote him in vindication of

* 1 Peter iii. 9. † 1 Peter iii. 17. ‡ 1 Peter iv. 13.
§ Romans xii. 17. 19, &c. ‖ 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13.
** Heb. xiii. 34. †† James v. 6.

concubinage, and of equivocation? And may not others, with equal propriety, urge his example in favour of circumcision and sacrifices?

The gratulations of Melchizedeck, upon the occasion of the patriarch's success, appear to sanction the enterprise; and all the circumstances of the case, and the period in which it occurred, being taken into the account, Abraham's conduct was, I doubt not, justifiable, and even worthy of applause. But we are under a different system of religion and morals; and though a Christian may be induced to lay down his own life for his brethren,* and be justified in so doing; it does not appear that he has, on any pretence, a right to take away the life of another: the example of Abraham, in his spirited and successful expedition against Chedorlaomer and his royal associates, cannot therefore be adduced as proper to be imitated by the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Two remarks may be sufficient to show that martial exploits do not enter either authoritatively or permissively into the Christian system of morals: the first is, that were genuine Christianity universal, there could be no offensive or defensive war; and the second is, that individuals are not to wait until their religion become universal, but are now under every obligation to conform to the pure and pacifick spirit and conduct which the Son of God has enjoined upon them; that is, they are bound to be as free from offence and from revenge individually, as if the whole human race formed one aggregate body of real Christians. And I may add, that the diffusion of the divine principles which characterise Christianity throughout the world, will, it is probable, never be accomplished, until the professors of Christianity shall, in their tempers, lives, and actions, exhibit and illustrate their religion in all its purity and energy. Missions may be projected and supported, zeal may occasionally burst forth with doubtful splendour; but mankind will not be induced to forsake the religion of their fathers, and to abandon their habits and their prejudices, unless missionaries produce the sublime doctrines and holy precepts they preach, existing in real life; unless zeal be associated with the mild and pure spirit of the Gospel; and Christians, wherever seen, shall evidently appear to be "more excellent than their neighbours."

The progress of revelation has been, like the rising light, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day: and considering the superiour information, and more extended and refined morality of the Gospel, it seems to be a retrograde movement, that refers us to remote ages for example, by

* 1 John iii. 16.

which we are to regulate our conduct, and decide questions of conscience. John the baptist had no superiour "among them that are born of women; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."*

I attend you to the New Testament, in which the direction of John† to the soldiers, claims our first regard. His advice is, "do violence to no man, neither accuse falsely, and be content with your wages." Regulated violence is the essence of war, and licentious violence its general accompaniment. A soldier acting up to the advice here given him, would be very unfit for discharging the active duties assigned him; but whether or not John's direction was to be understood as forbidding every species of violence, the difficulty must be shared between us: for whilst I have chosen to exhibit the pacifick system of the Gospel, as prohibiting violence even in self-defence; it will devolve upon you, Sir, to prove, that the employment of these soldiers, and the advice given them, were restricted to self-defence; or that, though forbidden to do violence, they might upon some occasions neglect the admonition.

With regard to these soldiers, and the other anecdotes of military characters recited in the New Testament, I observe,—that as neither our Lord nor his apostles ever interposed to direct or advise the form of government under which they lived, we ought not to expect from them any regulations of either a civil or a military nature: and it is a fact, that we find no admonition or precept addressed to political establishments. If a soldier, from being a Jewish proselyte, or a Pagan, became a convert to Christianity, there is no specifick direction given him to renounce the profession of arms.‡ But a question of considerable magnitude, and of some importance, is here suggested. These

* Matt. xi. 11. † Letter to Mr. Warner, p. 14.

‡ Neither is there any precept that exonerates the slave. Selling, purchasing, and employing slaves, are no where in the New Testament in literal terms prohibited or condemned. But will the advocates of humanity admit this silence on the subject, as an argument in favour of the horrid traffick? A considerable proportion of the primitive Christian societies consisted of such slaves; and what was their condition? "They were held pro nullis, pro mortuis, pro quadrupedibus; *for no men, for dead men, for beasts;* nay they were in a *much worse* state than any cattle whatsoever."—Dr. John Taylor's Elements of Civil Law, p. 428, 429, as quoted by Parkhurst, under the word Δουλος.

St. Paul, in his advice to such, says, "Art thou called, being a servant, (or slave)? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, (or slave,) is the Lord's freeman." 1 Cor. vii. 21, 22.

Can any thing possibly show the mild unresisting spirit of the Gospel in a more striking light, than such advice? And has not a slave as complete a natural right to life and liberty, as any man trained to arms? Yet he has no encouragement in the Gospel to assert his right, or to liberate himself by violence.

were Roman soldiers; and for what purposes were the Roman armies raised, disciplined, and designed? For defence only; or for conquest and aggrandizement chiefly? Some portion of the military was appropriated to guard the emperour, and contribute to the splendour of the court: other portions of them were stationed to protect the courts of law, and attend the officers of justice: but the great mass of the army was destined to make further conquests, or to preserve in subjection those already made. Your reference, therefore, to the subject of Christianized soldiers, and the silence of the New Testament respecting the inconsistency of their profession with their religion, will include more than you wish; and afford the advocates of *offensive* war as powerful an argument, as you can derive from it for *defensive* war. Can it be imagined, that our Lord and his apostles, by their silence on this head, connived at, or countenanced the passion of the Romans for extending their arms, and subjugating the whole human race? Is it rational to suppose, that he, who preached deliverance to the captives, would lend even the slightest encouragement to a haughty people, whose potent legions kept in slavish subjection the greatest part of the world, to persist in their sanguinary progress, and to detain their ill-gotten conquests?

Allow me just to observe, that it appears to me in the highest degree improbable, that the forerunner of Christ, Christ himself, or his apostles, would have encouraged that military spirit, by which their country was, at that very period, held in subjection to a foreign yoke.

Our Lord and his immediate followers had every motive, arising from attachments social, civil, and religious, to wish their country freed from the dominion of the Romans, and in the enjoyment of liberty and independence. But they enjoin a submission to "the powers that be," and never embrace opportunities the most favourable, never exert powers that must have succeeded, never drop a sentiment that tended to excite insurrection, resistance, or even discontent. Is it possible to produce a fact more striking and convincing, in favour of my proposition, "that Christianity is a System of Peace?"

Is it not unlikely, after all, that these soldiers were stationary in the cities and towns which had been subdued by the Romans; and might not, for a considerable time, if ever, be called out to the field of slaughter. And I beg leave to observe, that their continuance in their military profession is first assumed, and then transformed into an argument, in favour of the doctrine you maintain. I think, however, that it is equally proper to assume the negative, and I will tell you why I think so: Cornelius and his connexions, under the

instructions of St. Peter, received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost;* they spake with tongues, and magnified God. Now, is it credible, that supernatural powers were communicated to these soldiers, for the purpose of their continuing in the same situation and employment as before? Is it not more reasonable to infer, that these miraculous gifts, by which they were qualified to propagate the Gospel, should lead them to engage in that service; and, relinquishing the weapons of war, induce them to become the heralds of salvation?

Further—Were the Christian soldiers, do you suppose, to act from conviction, or to yield implicit obedience to the orders of their commanders? Could they, in submission to their superiours, engage in unjust warfare for the acquisition of additional territory; or, as was often the case in the Roman armies, for the purpose of gratifying their general with a triumph? Could they become the instruments of tenacious authority, in oppressing and laying waste countries struggling to recover their liberty? Or could they foment insurrections, and by force attempt the emancipation of their (perhaps native) country from foreign tyranny? Viewing this description of converts to Christianity in any and in every point of light, it appears extremely difficult, if possible, to form a coalition between the martial and the Christian character, upon New Testament evidence; or even to derive any solid arguments from the cases cited, in favour of military Christians.

You, Sir, have quoted archdeacon Paley on one side, and I have quoted him on the other. In support of your cause, he says,† "the profession of a soldier is, (in the New Testament,) no where forbidden or condemned;" and proceeds to adduce such evidence as the centurion, converted soldiers, and the advice of John the baptist, are supposed by him to afford. In favour of the cause which I have attempted to maintain, he agrees with Soame Jenyns, in excluding *patriotism and active courage*, in the sense in which these qualities are usually understood, from the class of virtuous qualities recommended in the Gospel. He includes in that class *passive courage* or *endurance of sufferings*, *patience under affronts and injuries*, *humility*, *irresistance*, *placability*. He then supplies the extracts which are introduced in my first letter, page 4. After referring to the sermon on the Mount, and citing some passages illustrative of the qualities required in Christians, he adds,‡ "This certainly is not common-place morality. It is very original. It shows, at least, (and it is for this purpose we produce it,) that no two

* Acts x. 44, 45, 46, 47. † Moral Philosophy, vol. ii. p. 406.
‡ View of the Evidences of Christianity, vol. ii. p. 32, 33.

things can be more different than the heroick and the Christian characters."

"Now the author to whom I refer, has not only remarked this difference more strongly than any preceding writer; but has proved, in contradiction to first impressions, to popular opinions, to the encomiums of orators and poets, and even the suffrages of historians and moralists, that the latter character possesses the most true worth, both as being most difficult either to be acquired or sustained, and as contributing most to the happiness and tranquillity of social life. If this disposition were universal, the case is clear: the world would be a society of friends. Whereas, if the other disposition were universal, it would produce a scene of universal contention."*

That the archdeacon, when describing Christianity, gives a clearer and more correct analysis of its morality, than when he incidentally introduces it into his Moral Philosophy, I most assuredly believe: though in the second volume of his Evidences of Christianity, p. 36, he has the following observation, which appears to me objectionable.

"It is sufficiently apparent, that the precepts we have recited, or rather the disposition which these precepts inculcate, relate to personal conduct from personal motives, to cases in which men act from impulse, for themselves, and from themselves. When it comes to be considered, what is necessary to be done for the sake of the publick, and out of regard for the general welfare, (which consideration, for the most part, ought exclusively to govern the duties of men in publick stations,) it comes to a case to which the rules do not belong."

In reply to this it may be said, that this kingdom consists of individuals, each of whom, from the regal head of the church down to the lowest rank, with the exception of a very small proportion of Jews, Mahometans, &c., by assuming the name of Christian, is considered as under the authority, and engaging to conform to the moral government of Christ. How then can any body or class of these individuals claim an exemption from a law which is binding upon each of them, both detached, and in connexion with their fellow-creatures?

The prophecies which announce the character of the Redeemer's kingdom, are certainly not *preceptive;* but I presume them to be true, and perceive also that when his king-

* If Christianity inculcates and cherishes this spirit, ought not every Christian to devote all his talent and energies to its extension, and to the diffusion of the inestimable blessings which it ensures? What good mind can hesitate to adopt and cultivate such dispositions, and promote their benign effects amongst his fellow-men?

dom was actually commenced, its principles and precepts exemplified the prediction.

When a person is said to wear a sword, we understand it to mean, that it generally constitutes an appendage to his dress. I am not sufficiently informed in the manners of that age, or of the dress of the Jews, (a people held in subjection by the Romans,) to determine the fact. The probability lies against their wearing swords, as a general custom. Whether Peter's occupation as a fisherman, who sometimes stripped himself, and plunged into the sea, was favourable to the habit of wearing a sword, I doubt. And that *two swords only* were found amongst twelve persons, is no very decisive evidence in favour of common usage, if wearing swords were such. One fact is, however, sufficiently obvious; we never hear of Peter appearing armed, until, after a lapse of ages, ambitious ecclesiasticks supplied him with the sword and the keys, and the church became literally "terrible as any army with banners."

The passage in Luke xxii. 36, may be interpreted literally, without blame; but the propriety of so doing is questionable, as after that event, we have no reason to suppose that Peter ever wore or used a sword; and if he complied with the words of the precept, permission, or prediction, in carrying a purse, it seems it was but poorly replenished, for on one occasion he tells the helpless suppliant, "silver and gold have I none."*

The goodness of your principles, and the benevolence of your heart, induce you to reject every species of warfare that is not strictly defensive; but the limitation itself has its difficulties, which I alluded to in a note, page 4, of my first Letter.

An aggressor commences hostilities; the defensive power attacks an Island belonging to the former; the inhabitants defend themselves. The cultivators of that island, who probably are totally ignorant of the war, its cause, or its justice, consider the attack as an aggression and endeavour to repel the assailants, and preserve themselves and their property.—A merchantman sailing in perfect security, as the crew apprehend, is encountered by a legal pirate, and the only alternative is, submission or sinking to the bottom. Pardon my adoption of the patriarch's exclamation; "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel!"†

Must we restrict our notions of the justice of a war to the first offence? Will not that generate a progeny of reciprocal aggressions, and the question at length become so perplexed, as to be incapable of satisfactory solution? It is

* Acts iv. 6. † Genesis xlix. 6, 7.

my serious opinion, that by vindicating the propriety of *defensive* war, every description of war must also be vindicated. The causes, or rather the occasions of war, are so numerous, so various, sometimes so frivolous, and generally so imperfectly known to the mass of the people who are to support it, that it is almost, if not wholly, impracticable to decide with precision on the justice or necessity of any war.

Such is the superiour delicacy of Christian morality, that it forbids us to return evil for evil; to irritate bad passions by going to law; and enjoins us to suffer ourselves rather to be defrauded, and to obtain a glorious conquest over ourselves and others, by subduing evil with good. And if the principle which *you* embrace ever becomes universally prevalent, aggression ceasing, defence will be superseded; and every benevolent heart will rejoice in the emancipation of the world from the dæmon of discord and war.

The religion that is constructed in all its parts to effect a purpose so magnificent, and so beneficial to mankind, cannot admit into its code any revengeful passions, or hostile violence: and in the full conviction that this is the true character of Christianity, I wish myself and others who profess it, to cherish and extend its benign spirit, in the blessed expectation that the grand object, however protracted, will ultimately be accomplished.

Your suggestion that the few persons engaged in the direction of publick affairs in states, *might* be the leaven which would leaven the whole lump, comes within the limits of possibility: I wish from my heart, it was also within the precincts of probability. Whether the pure spirit of Christian benevolence begin among the higher or lower ranks, may it pervade the whole community, and constitute the national character!

My country! peace be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces! May her officers be peace, and her exactors righteousness! May her walls be salvation, and her gates praise! May integrity and uprightness preserve her, truth and holiness constitute her glory, and upon all the glory may there be a defence!

Reverend Sir, I have endeavoured to supply the deficiencies of my first Address, by considering those ramifications of the subject, which were either neglected as of subordinate importance, or but cursorily noticed. I have now done. Feeling as I do, a confidence in the strength and goodness of the cause I have embraced; I am only apprehensive, lest the placid genius of the Gospel should be injured by the inadvertence or incompetency of its humble apologist.

I am, reverend Sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

July 20, 1804. T. P.

THOUGHTS,

AFTER READING THE FOREGOING.

THE doctrine of the Messiah relative to war, is easily understood by the real subjects of His government; who, under His banner are conflicting with their proper enemies, those "of their own houses." Such appear to themselves too much the objects of mercy, to make the evil propensities of others a pretext for destroying them; sensible that this heavenly boon must from the nature of things, ever be denied to a relentless and unforgiving spirit.

Where this internal warfare is not actually engaged in, the ground of external wars and fightings is easily overlooked; for warriours will always find in their alternate provocations and resentments, sufficient excuse for a retaliation of injuries. But though such may value themselves on superiour degrees of light and knowledge, and even profess allegiance to the Prince of Peace; it is evident to every dispassionate observer, that they as little respect his precepts and example, as any other inhabitants of the earth who never heard of his name.

To tell an infuriated warriour, that, as men are to be known by their fruits,* *he* can have no more right to the Christian name, than a savage who never heard any thing of it, would probably be more than he could bear; but as "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,† and as Christ hath declared, that he came "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them;"‡ it is hard to conceive how any one exercised either in projecting or executing warlike measures, can seriously believe himself to be at the same time a real Christian. *Certainly* something more than profession is necessary to the character; and what that *something* is, we are told in these plain words of the apostle, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His."§

There is at best no more difference between offensive and defensive war, than between the first and second blow in a battle: all that follows the second is equally offensive, and it requires the same spirit of violence in both the combatants to maintain the contest. But though some Christian professors only plead the authority of the Scriptures in support of their scruples, they seldom converse with their opponents on the subject, without being questioned whether they can say they would, under all circumstances, adhere to their principles: as if this was the criterion on which the authenticity of the Scriptures depended, or the conduct of any one could render them true or false.

What Sir! (said one of those captious inquisitors,) If a ruffian should enter your house with a full purpose to kill your wife and children, and you could no otherwise save their lives than by knocking him on the head, would you scruple to do it? Here it is presumed that the person assailed is certain of the assailant's purpose; and that there is no means of defeating it, but by

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* Matt. vii. 16. † Romans v. 8. ‡ Luke ix. 56.
§ Romans viii. 9.

adopting his intention, and killing him. The answer—and the only one the case would admit of—was, Thou queriest of me, a poor weak creature, what I would do in the moment of temptation? I can only say, I possibly might, and if left to myself *probably should*, do wrong;* but how would that prove the principle itself to be false?

In like manner, a celebrated preacher expatiating on the doctrine of a perfect redemption from sin attainable in this life; instead of pressing it on his hearers as the mark of their high calling, ludicrously exclaimed, "Send me a man who can declare he has arrived at it, and I'll engage to pay him the expense of his journey." Now had the disciples to whom these precepts, "I say unto you, resist not evil—forgive men their trespasses against you—love and pray for your enemies—be ye perfect,"† &c. were addressed, answered, Lord, thou requirest impossibilities of us—what can we think would have been his reply?

It is certainly out of character for any one who apprehends himself commissioned to espouse the cause of Christ, to plead for war in contradiction to his plain and positive precepts, and the declared end of his coming; and especially when the nations which have the record of those precepts almost exclusively in their hands, are all worrying and destroying each other, in a degree almost without precedent. Can those who believe our Lord *really did* declare he came to save men's lives, in the very act of destroying them, imagine themselves to be his followers?

To attempt to justify war by the example of that in heaven, alluded to by Jude, and in Rev. xii. 7. appears to be a mischievous interpretation of Scripture. For with equal propriety it may be said, that what the apostle has expressed of "the armour of God," and wrestling "against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places," is all to be understood as analogous to the sanguinary contests of mankind with each other. But to obviate so dangerous a construction, we must take the apostle's own explanation, viz. *Though we walk in the flesh, we war not after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but mighty through God to the pulling down strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* 2 Cor. x. 3, 4, 5.

This is the warfare into which alone the Saviour of the world can, consistently with his own precepts and example, call and lead his followers—not the battle which "is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood," and in which the greatest possible success may leave a man's proper enemies, those of his own house, in full strength and unsubdued.

Such insinuations cannot but be of an injurious tendency, by fostering a martial spirit, and leading unstable minds to imagine, that it is rather promotive than a hinderance in the way to that Holy Mountain, where the Scriptures declare there is nothing that hurts or destroys.

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* Witness Peter's conduct, Matt. xxvi. 33.

† Matt. v.

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